



January 29, 2008

Ms. Anne Sweeney
President
Disney-ABC Television Group
500 S. Buena Vista Street
Burbank, CA 91521-4768

Re: Eli Stone “Pilot” Episode

Dear Ms. Sweeney:

We are aware of requests made to your office for the cancellation of the Eli Stone “Pilot” episode and are encouraged that ABC is moving forward with plans to air the episode. While this episode portrays a fictional family, it is timely given that there are thousands of cases yet to be heard in vaccine court with regard to a mercury-autism link. We are also aware that the program will direct viewers to learn more about autism by visiting the CDC’s website. In the interest of acknowledging that this area of research is ongoing, we request that ABC also allow statements to that effect and give viewers an opportunity to visit our website for information on research supporting a link between autism and mercury-containing vaccines. In essence, we feel that your viewers should hear both sides of the real-life story given that the 2003 Congressional report “Mercury in Medicine – Taking Unnecessary Risks” states:

"Thimerosal used as a preservative in vaccines is likely related to the autism epidemic. This epidemic in all probability may have been prevented or curtailed had the FDA not been asleep at the switch regarding the lack of safety data regarding injected thimerosal and the sharp rise of infant exposure to this known neurotoxin. Our public health agencies' failure to act is indicative of institutional malfeasance for self-protection and misplaced protectionism of the pharmaceutical industry."

The position of our organization has always been one based on science and cannot be misconstrued as anti-vaccine. This episode deals with mercury in the flu shot, a vaccine that is available in a mercury free version. SafeMinds supports erring on the side of caution and safe vaccine practice and has offered testimony in Congress to that effect. Today, most vaccines contain only trace amounts of mercury, or are mercury free, except for the flu shot. While research on the role of mercury in vaccines in relation to neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism continues, we cannot support the use of mercury-containing vaccines. Please see the attached statements made by Len Lavenda of Sanofi Pasteur to me regarding this matter and their capacity to meet demand with mercury-free versions of the flu shot, as well as the attached Mercury in Vaccines FAQ for more information.

Additionally, a drop in immunization rates are ill-founded when considering the facts, as well as the budgets at the disposal of concerned parties in disseminating information regarding mercury-free vaccines. There is scientific evidence supporting the autism-mercury link that can easily be cited to refute claims of no link. As such, the subject addressed in the Eli Stone episode is not fictional. As recently as November of 2007 the following study* was published in the peer reviewed *Journal of Child Neurology*, stating the following:

“The question of what is leading to the apparent increase in autism is of great importance. Like the link between aspirin and heart attack, even a small effect can have major health implications. If there is any link between autism and mercury, it is absolutely crucial that the first reports of the question are not falsely stating that no link occurs. We

have reanalyzed the data set originally reported by Ip et al. in 2004 and have found that the original p value was in error and that a significant relation does exist between the blood levels of mercury and diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder. Moreover, the hair sample analysis results offer some support for the idea that persons with autism may be less efficient and more variable at eliminating mercury from the blood."

Also of interest, in September of 2007 Senate Committee hearings found the FDA had not met their statutory obligation in adequately demonstrating the safety of mercury in vaccines. To date, studies claiming that mercury in vaccines is safe and that no autism link exists continue to be underpowered, of poor design and rife with conflicts of interest. Our organization has historically acted as a clearinghouse in publishing statements and analyses of these studies, delineating clearly these limitations, design flaws and ill-supported conclusions. We regularly issue statements in this regard and publish this information on our website as a public service. Since our inception in 2000, our Board Members have published 13 research articles on the subject, as well as SafeMinds having directly funded over \$1 million in scientific research to determine mercury's effects on the health of our children.

In closing, SafeMinds contacted the media relations team of Eli Stone early last week to offer support on the science of this topic, knowing that ABC may come under pressure by advertisers and agencies to cancel this episode. We reiterate that offer in the interest of objectively informing the public regarding this matter.

Please contact me at your convenience with any questions, or requests for additional information. We look forward to your prompt response.

Best Regards,



Theresa K. Wrangham,
President

Encs: SafeMinds Influenza Vaccine Brochure
Mercury & Vaccines FAQ
Lavenda/Wrangham Email

* DeSoto & Hitlan. Blood Levels of Mercury Are Related to Diagnosis of Autism: A Reanalysis of an Important Data Set. *Journal of Child Neurology*, Vol. 22, No. 11, 1308-1311